

# Middle East and Adjoining Countries Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025



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# 1 Executive Summary

In an effort to align ICANN's latest global [Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025](#) with regional needs and demands, a group of community members came together under the support of the Global Stakeholder Engagement team for the Middle East (GSE Middle East) to develop a new regional engagement plan for ICANN in the Middle East.

After several consultations, the group agreed that the following four of the five strategic focus areas are of relevance to the region:

1. Security
2. ICANN's Governance
3. Unique Identifier Systems
4. Geopolitics

Under each strategic focus area, the Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group (MEAC-SWG) identified a subset of goals relevant to the region, adapting them to fit the needs and demands of the region. This was followed by identifying targeted outcomes, proposed actions, and metrics for each strategic focus area to help guide the implementation phase.

In executing this regional plan, a detailed action plan will be developed annually in close coordination with the MEAC-SWG. This action plan will list projects and activities that will be undertaken during an ICANN fiscal year (1 July to 30 June).

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## 2 Introduction

The Middle East and Adjoining Countries Regional plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 is the third strategy developed, now referred to as regional plan, to drive ICANN's engagement efforts in the region. The two previous strategies<sup>1</sup> were:

1. [2013-2016 Middle East Strategy](#)
2. [2016-2020 Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy](#)

### 2.1 MEAC Strategy Working Group: Background and Terms of Reference

In September 2019, after close coordination with the 2016-2020 MEAC-SWG, a public call was made to onboard community members for developing a new regional plan aligned with [ICANN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan](#).

In October 2019, the newly established MEAC-SWG<sup>2</sup> was formed, and tasked with developing a new engagement plan for ICANN in the Middle East. The initial work revolved around:

- Updating the Charter for the MEAC-SWG to fit its needs.
- Acquainting the MEAC-SWG members with the ICANN 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.
- Acquainting the MEAC-SWG members with the ICANN 2016-2020 MEAC Strategy.

The MEAC- SWG initially agreed on:

- Confirming the SWG name as “Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group (MEAC-SWG)”.
- Defining the term of the regional plan to run for five years concluding 30 June 2025.
- Appointing a Chair and a Vice-Chair of the MEAC-SWG through nominations and elections. This resulted in the appointment of Rafik Dammak from Tunisia as Chair, and Hadia Elminiawi from Egypt as Vice-Chair.
- Key timelines:
  - Release draft regional plan for public comment by February 2020.
  - Hold a public consultation session at ICANN67 in Cancún, in March 2020<sup>3</sup>.
  - Finalize the regional plan document by the end of April 2020 and subsequently, work on the “Year One” Action Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to [Annex A](#) for further details.

<sup>2</sup> MEAC-SWG members and observers are listed in [Annex B](#).

<sup>3</sup> ICANN67 in Cancun was converted to a Virtual meeting due to COVID-19. As a result, the planned public consultation session was held as a webinar after the conclusion of the ICANN67 Virtual Meeting.

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## 2.2 Geographic Scope

The regional plan covers the twenty two Arab countries that are members of the League of Arab States<sup>4</sup>, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey.

## 2.3 Alignment with ICANN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

The MEAC-SWG studied [ICANN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan](#), and its relevance to the region. The MEAC-SWG also explored if there were areas not covered by ICANN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan that might be important for the region to address in the regional plan.

The MEAC-SWG reached consensus on the strategic focus areas and respective goals as shown in Section 3 below.

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to the League of Arab State member states page:  
<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/aboutlas/Pages/CountryData.aspx>

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## 3 The Regional Plan

The MEAC-SWG identified four strategic focus areas of relevance to the Middle East. Under each strategic focus area, regional goals were identified along with their targeted outcomes, proposed actions, and metrics.

The draft version of the regional plan document was published for public comments. Comments received were analyzed by ICANN org and discussed in detail with the MEAC-SWG. Based on the MEAC-SWG input, ICANN org finalized and published the staff report<sup>5</sup>. In developing the final version of the regional plan, relevant comments were incorporated. Metrics were also listed under each focus area.

In executing the regional plan, a detailed Action Plan will be developed annually. This will provide further details on the implementation of the proposed action items listed in the regional plan document, as well as any potential additional items.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to [Annex C](#) for links to the documents mentioned.

ICANN Strategic Focus Area & Strategic Objectives	Regional Goals	Targeted Outcomes	Proposed Actions <sup>6</sup>	Metrics
<p><b>1. Security</b></p> <p><b><i>Strengthen the security of the Domain Name System (DNS) and the DNS Root Server System.</i></b></p>	<p>1.1 Support the development of technical capacities and the building of regional networks of technical experts in partnership with relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>1.2 Identify and mitigate security threats to the DNS through engagement with relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>* Increased technical knowledge and skill level in operating DNS infrastructures in a stable and secure manner.</p> <p>* Increased level of awareness and knowledge about DNS security threats and mechanisms to mitigate them.</p> <p>* Geographically diverse ICANN Managed Root Server (IMRS) instances deployment, more DNSSEC uptake and validation, and better DNS hygiene.</p>	<p>* Assess the regional needs in terms of capacity development, skills, knowledge, and expertise.</p> <p>* Deliver training, workshops, webinars, online courses, and share information and white papers around topics related to DNS and DNS security.</p> <p>* Deliver train-the-trainer (TtT) programs where needed.</p> <p>* Fulfill IMRS instance deployment requests and encourage deployment of the same in diverse geographies.</p>	<p>+ Surveys</p> <p>+ Workshops</p> <p>+ Local trainers</p> <p>+ DNSSEC deployment</p> <p>+ IMRS instances</p> <p>+ Opportunities for partnerships and/or collaboration</p>

<sup>6</sup> Where engagement activities such as training, workshops, meetings, and others, are mentioned, it is important to note that such activities may be taking place remotely, especially, but not only, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual action plans will include more specificity as to the nature of the different events.

<p><b>2. ICANN's Governance</b></p> <p><i>Improve the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance.</i></p>	<p>2.1 Support and grow active and informed stakeholder participation from the region.</p> <p>2.2 Contribute to the improvement of ICANN's multistakeholder model, and share learnings and experiences at regional and national levels.</p>	<p>* Increased meaningful stakeholder participation. Use active community members engaged in ICANN's multistakeholder processes as an example.</p> <p>* Increased awareness and understanding of ICANN's multistakeholder model across the region.</p>	<p>* Facilitate and encourage community members' participation in ICANN's multistakeholder processes.</p> <p>* Support and, when needed, contribute to regional activities organized by ICANN's Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees (SO/ACs).</p> <p>* Promote ICANN programs such as the Newcomers program, Fellowship program, NextGen program, Community Regional Outreach program (CROP), the ICANN Learn platform, and other relevant programs.</p> <p>* Organize, support, and participate in relevant regional activities to raise awareness of ICANN's role and encourage participation in its work.</p>	<p>+ Leadership roles and/or participation in SO/AC, Working Groups, etc.</p> <p>+ Input received on various documents and processes including public comments</p> <p>+ Participation in webinars, activities, and programs</p> <p>+ Enrolling in ICANN Learn courses</p> <p>+ Media coverage of ICANN related news</p>
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<p><b>3. Unique Identifier Systems</b></p> <p><i>Evolve the unique identifier systems in coordination and collaboration with relevant parties to continue to serve the needs of the global Internet user base.</i></p>	<p>3.1 Support the use of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) in the region.</p> <p>3.2 Promote readiness for Universal Acceptance (UA) and encourage stakeholders from technology developers, service providers, and policy makers to consider UA implementation.</p> <p>3.3 Raise awareness about the next round of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs), and inform regional stakeholders of all aspects of the program.</p> <p>3.4 Promote ICANN's role in ensuring the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems.</p>	<p>* Increased awareness about IDN and UA implementation.</p> <p>* Increased adoption of IDNs and UA in the region.</p> <p>* Informed and equipped regional community on the next round of new gTLDs and the process.</p> <p>* A healthy DNS environment that embraces the latest standards and protocols.</p>	<p>* Deliver training, workshops, webinars, online courses, and share information and white papers around topics related to the unique identifier systems, including the next round of new gTLDs, Universal Acceptance and IDNs.</p> <p>* Promote the work of Universal Acceptance to relevant stakeholders and encourage them to join the different Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) working groups, and work closely with the UASG and UA Ambassadors to support the work around local initiatives.</p> <p>* Raise awareness, and where possible and appropriate, promote and support the adoption of new standards and protocols related to the Internet's unique identifier systems.</p> <p>* Continue to work and collaborate with the DNS Entrepreneurship Center (DNS-EC).</p> <p>* Review the key findings of the MEAC DNS study of 2015.</p>	<p>+ Workshops + UA Ambassadors + UA Local initiatives + TF-AIDN progress + DNS-EC progress + New gTLD activities + Opportunities for partnerships and/or collaborations</p>
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<p><b>4. Geopolitics</b></p> <p><i>Address geopolitical issues impacting ICANN's mission to ensure a single, globally interoperable Internet.</i></p>	<p>4.1 Monitor legislative efforts that could impact ICANN's mission or operations on both the national and regional levels.</p> <p>4.2 Work with ICANN's Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees (SO/ACs) to expand outreach to the wider community and engage with all stakeholders in relation to ICANN's mission and policy making.</p>	<p>* Have a process in place, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, to monitor legislative efforts in the region in relation to ICANN's mission.</p> <p>* Increased awareness and understanding of the role of ICANN among policy makers, regulatory authorities, academia, business leaders, and relevant stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>* Offer technical expertise to inform policy makers and other relevant stakeholders of the potential impact some regulations and legislations may have on the DNS and its global operation.</p> <p>* Provide summary reports highlighting developments in relation to DNS-related regulations and legislation in the region.</p>	<p>+ Input from community</p> <p>+ Opportunities for raising awareness and informing community</p>
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**NOTE:** ICANN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan has a fifth strategic focus area: "Finances". To continue its role in supporting the implementation of the regional plan, the MEAC-SWG will provide input regarding the predictable funding projections related to the different regional activities and assess those projections and requirements throughout the implementation phase.

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## 4 Annex A - Review of the Previous Regional Strategies

### 4.1 2013-2016 Middle East Strategy

After the conclusion of the 2013-2016 Middle East Strategy, a thorough review was conducted. This can be found [here](#). Key achievements included:

- The [DNS Entrepreneurship Center \(DNS-EC\)](#) inaugurated in 2014.
- The annual [Middle East DNS Forum](#) established to offer industry-related discussions and networking opportunities with local and international experts. During this strategy term, the Forum was held in: UAE (2014), Jordan (2015), and Tunisia (2016).
- The [study on the DNS market](#) in the Middle East, commissioned and released in 2015.
- The Task Force on Arabic Script Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) ([TF-AIDN](#)), a community group established to promote the use of Arabic Script IDNs. A major accomplishment during this period, was the development of [Arabic Script's Label Generation Ruleset \(LGR\)](#), the first to be integrated into the [Root Zone LGR](#).
- The [Middle East and Adjoining Countries School on Internet Governance \(MEAC-SIG\)](#), a capacity development program helping the regional community better understand Internet governance. The program also facilitates community engagement in related forums at national, regional and international levels. During the term of this strategy, two editions were held: Kuwait (2014) and Tunisia (2015).
- Formation of key partnerships/collaborations through Memorandums of Understanding with:
  - [Egypt's National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority](#), supporting the establishment of the DNS Entrepreneurship Center (DNS-EC).
  - [Qatar's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology](#), promoting regional growth in the domain name industry and the global multistakeholder approach to Internet Governance.
  - [EURid](#), advocating the use of IDNs and developing local expertise in DNS technical, policy and business areas.

**NOTE:** One ICANN public meeting was held in the region during the term of this strategy; Morocco (2016).

### 4.2 2016-2020 MEAC Strategy

The second regional strategy built on the first one, evolving existing projects and developing new engagement vectors as highlighted below.

#### EXISTING PROJECTS:

- The DNS-EC:
  - Expanded its services to Africa.

- Led DNS technical workshops and Universal Acceptance projects.
- The Middle East DNS Forum (MEDNSF):
  - Four editions of the MEDNSF: Egypt (2017), Turkey (2018), UAE (2019), and Saudi Arabia (2020).
  - As a result of this annual event, some Country Code Top Level Domains (ccTLDs) in the region are looking into hosting an annual Domains Day event.
- Task Force on Arabic Script IDNs (TF-AIDN):
  - The TF-AIDN continued its work on Label Generation Rules (LGR) at the Second Level, in addition to its work on Universal Acceptance.
- MEAC School of Internet Governance (MEAC-SIG):
  - Four editions of the MEAC-SIG: Lebanon (2016), Turkey (2017), Egypt (2018), and Morocco (2019).
  - In 2018, the MEAC-SIG developed strong collaborations with the Arab World Internet Institute (AWII), ICANN, the Internet Governance Project (IGP), the Internet Society (ISOC), and The Réseaux IP Européens Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC).
- Enhanced engagement with the Technical Community through technical capacity development workshops, seminars, and talks.
- Engagement with Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and CERTs through trainings and talks.

#### **NEW ENGAGEMENT VECTORS:**

- Annual “Middle East Space” sessions during the two main ICANN public meetings. ICANN60 in November 2017 was the first session.
- Readout sessions for ICANN Public Meetings held both online and face-to-face in Istanbul, Turkey.
- Academic collaboration:
  - Collaborations formed with Al-Khwarizmi Center for Computation (CCK) in Tunisia for seminars on ICANN, Istanbul Bilgi University in Turkey for ICANN Readout Sessions, and the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Turkey for Universal Acceptance.
- Annual surveys:
  - Surveys conducted to gauge the regional community’s satisfaction in ICANN’s regional engagement efforts and activities.
- Stronger collaborations with ISOC and RIPE NCC through:
  - Joint workshops
  - Contribution to their events
- Dedicated engagements with Civil Society and At-Large Structures.
- Remote engagement in countries ICANN is unable to engage physically in such as Somalia, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Part of this engagement involves utilizing ICANN Learn.
- Workshops for Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees:
  - Dedicated SO/AC specific workshops such as Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) Capacity Development Workshops and the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Workshop 2019.

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**NOTE:** While not related to the strategy, two ICANN public meetings were held in the region during the term of this strategy: UAE (2017) and Morocco (2019).

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## 5 Annex B - MEAC-SWG Membership

Members and observers of the MEAC-SWG, along with their respective expressions of interest, can be found online [here](#).

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## 6 Annex C - References

- Draft regional plan document - <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/meac-regional-strategy-2021-2025-18feb20-en.pdf>
- Public comments received - <https://mm.icann.org/pipermail/comments-meac-strategy-18feb20/>
- Public comments staff report - <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/report-comments-meac-strategy-17apr20-en.pdf>
- 2021-2025 MEAC regional plan working space - <https://community.icann.org/display/MES/MEAC+Strategy+2021-2025>



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